



Elmhurst Academy  
~ RIVER CLASSROOM ~

## “Riflessione”

January 13--January 24, 2020

Mrs. Webber, Ms. Hart, Ms. Miner, and Mrs. Flores

*A private, independent Reggio Emilia inspired  
early childhood school.*

“Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Stencils:** The students were introduced to the wooden stencils where they could use different writing tools and follow various patterns. The students were provided with templates and encouraged to trace the different curves and zig-zags. Working with these patterns allows the students to use fine motor skills that will be essential for future letter formations.

Instead of using regular crayons, the students worked with triangular crayons. Unlike regular crayons, these crayons are designed to not roll off the tables. The crayons also provide the grip needed for developing writing skills. To provide a more challenging experience, the Toddler Two students used colored pencils.



Joe follows the up and down pattern on the stencil using his triangular crayon.



Valentina uses her right hand as her skilled hand to trace and her left hand as the helper hand to stabilize the stencil.

Some of the students could be seen using their “skilled” hand to control the writing tool, while using their “helper” hand to stabilize the stencil on the table. The skilled hand refers to a child using whichever hand they prefer to complete tasks. The helper hand refers to the child purposely using the hand to hold objects in place. These wooden stencils are also used for practicing early writing.

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Zig zag
- Curve
- Up and down
- Helper hand

**Questions for reflection:**

- Did you go up and down with the stencil?
- Did you go around and around with the stencil?

**Author Studies: Such a Little Mouse: Seasonal Paintings:**

The River students continued their study of Alice Schertle by reading *Such a Little Mouse*. Throughout the story, the little mouse makes its way through the four seasons; summer, fall, winter, and spring. To explore the seasons in a visual way, the River students were encouraged to investigate the different colors of each season. In small groups, the students were invited to paint large pieces of white paper with the various colors of the seasons; the students used green paint for summer, orange and yellow paint for fall, white and silver paint for winter, and green and pink paint for spring. While painting, the students were encouraged to use their fingers or paint brushes. Although most students preferred to dip their hands and fingers into the paint and make designs on the paper, others



preferred to use the paint brushes to create longer lines. While painting, a

“I make a snowman!” June exclaims as she paints the season, winter.

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What colors are you painting with?
- What colors do you see outside during summer/spring/fall/winter?
- What does it feel like outside during summer/spring/fall/winter?

teacher prompted the students to think about the colors they were using and the differences between the season by asking questions such as, “What colors do you see outside during summer/spring/fall/winter?” and “What does it feel like during summer/spring/fall/winter?”

The students responded by relating their answers to the colors of paint they were using and by discussing the differences in weather during the season, such as stating, “It’s cold!” or “It’s hot!” when thinking about winter and summer. After

the paintings had dried, a teacher cut out each piece of paper into leaves and displayed them on a multi-seasonal tree on the Author Studies wall.

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Seasons
- Fall
- Winter
- Spring
- Summer
- Color
- Weather

"I'm making leaves!" Michaela excitedly states while painting the season, fall.



**Terrific Twos:** The students continue to interact with materials from the Writer's Workshop Curriculum. As they have become more familiar with the wood pieces and learning new songs with "Mat Man" and "Tap, Tap, Tap," we have now begun with the hands on letter play. The Hands on Letter Play is the child friendly way to teach young children about early letter formation. First, we began by playing a touch and feel game. The wood pieces were placed into a box of cereal and the students took turns placing their hands inside and taking out a few of the wood pieces as we reviewed the lines and curves and whether they were big or little. Next, each student was provided with a laminated letter card with the first letter of their name. Each card shows a different letter made with the wood pieces. All the wood pieces were placed on the table and the students were asked to locate the pieces and try and match the pieces onto their cards. The students appeared excited as they began creating the first letter of their name.



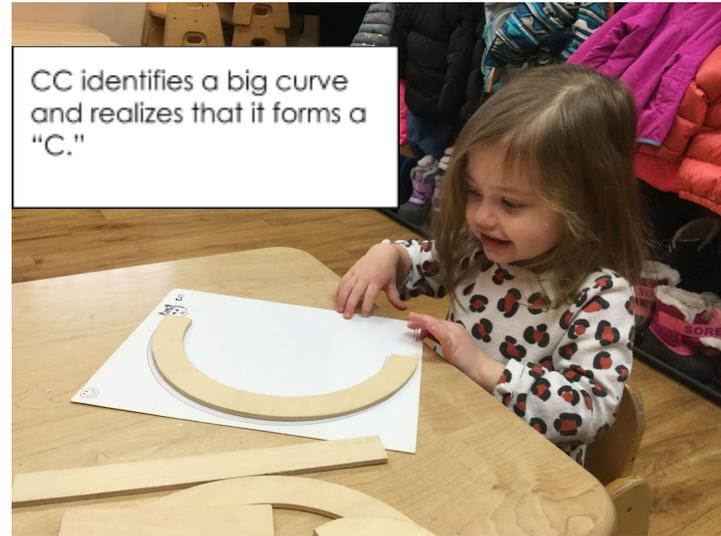
Fiona creates an F and exclaims "F for Fiona!"

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Big Line
- Little Line
- Big Curve
- Little Curve

**Look What we are Learning:**

- Perceive the size, shape or identity of an object by sense of touch.
- Foundational skills: sequencing.
- Alphabet knowledge: point to and name capital letter cards.
- Comprehension: Listen to perform a task
- Sensory Motor: Move an object in one hand to position it for use, placement or release.



CC identifies a big curve and realizes that it forms a "C."

**Driving on Letters:** The students are continuing to work on

their letter recognition throughout this month. While inside the classroom, teachers formed a letter activity on the floor. A teacher created different letters on the floor with pieces of white tape. Then, the students were provided with various cars and trucks. The teachers challenged the students to "drive" their cars on the outlines of each letter. Students appeared eager as they were handed their vehicles and began driving them over the outlines of each letter. During this activity, teachers would ask the students questions such as, "What letter is that?" "Is that a curved or straight line?" and "Can you find the first letter of your name?"



"Beep, beep!" says Sebastian as he drives his truck along the letter, N.



"A," Jamie repeats after a teacher while driving his truck along the letter, A.

Students became excited when they were able to find the first letter of their names. Throughout the school year, the River classroom will continue to incorporate letter recognition into various activities.

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What letter does your name start with?
- What is the difference between a curved and a straight line?

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Letter
- Curved
- Straight
- Name

**Project Approach: The Language of Music:** While thinking about what the River students would enjoy studying for their next project, the River teachers were consistently drawn to the students' love of music. A favorite book among the River students has become *My First Little Mother Goose*. This book is a compilation of nursery rhymes and songs such as: Ring Around the Rosie, Do You Know the Muffin Man, Pat-A-Cake, and Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Over the course of the past few months, many of the River students have memorized the songs in this book and can frequently be heard singing them during the day. Additionally, the River students consistently request that their teachers, "sing some songs!" throughout the day. The students are very enthusiastic about joining their teachers at the flannel board and singing along to all of the songs. Based on these observations and the River students' interest in singing and dancing, the River teachers began our new classroom project: The Language of Music. To introduce this project to the students, the teachers laid out many different instruments such as bells, drums, shakers, and tambourines, and encouraged the students to explore what



Laurel sings, Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star while ringing a bell after showing her teachers a picture of a star.

Several River students play their instruments and sing along to, Row Your Boat together.



sounds they made. The students were immediately excited to pick out an instrument and hear what it sounded like. While some students preferred the shakers and bells, others preferred to use a drumstick to tap on a drum or a hard surface within the classroom. To enhance the activity, the teachers also placed pictures of muffins, birthday cakes, stars, trains, row boats, and children playing ring around the rosie throughout the classroom. The teachers were curious about

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Music
- Sound
- Song
- Instrument
- Shake
- Tap
- Rhythm

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What is that instrument called?
- What sound does the instrument make?
- Does the instrument sound loud or quiet?
- What do you notice in the pictures?

what the students might do with these pictures. Soon, several of the students began to approach their teachers and friends and label what they saw on the pictures. When asked, "Do you know any songs that might go along with that picture?", the students would begin to sing songs such as Happy Birthday, Row Your Boat, and Do You Know the Muffin Man. Some friends began lining the pictures up on the table and encouraging their friends to play their instruments and sing along to the song that corresponded to the picture. The River students were very interested in exploring each instrument and singing and playing along with their friends. We are curious and excited to see where the River students will guide The Language of Music project.



Gloria uses the mallet to "tap" on the tambourine.

**Kid Inventors Day:** Each year, January, 17<sup>th</sup> is recognized as Kid Inventors' Day. January 17<sup>th</sup> is also recognized as Benjamin Franklin's birthday. At age 12, Benjamin Franklin invented the first pair of swim flippers. Since the beginning of Kid Inventors' Day, children have invented over 500,000 new gadgets! This year, the students were provided with



Chloe uses tape to enhance her invention.



Margot uses a screwdriver to poke into the box as she creates her "crocodile's mouth."

several boxes and other recyclable materials, tape and tools to build and construct whatever they wanted. Creativity

quickly took over the River Classroom.

- Vocabulary Words:**
- Invent
  - Build
  - Tool
  - Hammer,
  - Screwdriver
  - Tape

- What did you invent?**
- Margot: Crocodile  
 Gloria: Phone  
 June: Tunnel and cave  
 Emery: Crackers  
 CC: Train, choo-choo

**Project Health: Going to the Doctor:** Recently, the students have been requesting their teachers to read the book "Going to the Doctor." Recognizing their curiosity for what was happening in the story, the teachers presented the students with a pretend medical kit. The students were able to dress up like doctors, use tools such as stethoscopes, thermometers and reflex hammers as they checked the babydolls, their teachers and one another. We discussed how doctors help to keep us healthy. The students would provide medicine to the babydolls if they had a cough or a fever. Through this activity, the students practiced healthy habits and knowing what keeps us safe and healthy.



Mila made sure to check the baby thoroughly telling her teacher "I check baby's heart. "

**Questions for Reflection:**

- When do you go to the doctor?
- What does the doctor check?
- How do you use a stethoscope?

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Stethoscope
- Thermometer
- Doctor

**Author Studies: Building Snowmen:** The River students continued their study of author, Alice Schertle, by reading *All You Need for a Snowman*. This book tells the story of a group of children who use the snow and their imaginations to create a snowman. Based on the River students' interest in the snow that is currently on the ground outside, it seemed like a perfect opportunity to connect our author studies activity to snow exploration. After reading *All You Need for a Snowman* in small groups, each student was presented with a sensory bin full of snow and various loose parts. The students were immediately curious to explore the snow and began exclaiming, "Snow!" and "It's so cold!" A teacher prompted the students to investigate the snow and loose parts further by



"I stack them. Look! I make a snowman!" Ezra proudly exclaims after building his snowman.

stating, "I wonder what you can build using the snow."

**Questions for Reflection:**

- How does the snow feel?
- What could you use the snow to build?
- What are you adding to your snowman?

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Snow
- Snowman
- Build
- Cold
- Create

Many of the River students immediately exclaimed, "A snowman!" and began to use the snow and loose parts to create their own snowman. While some students rolled the snow together between their hands to create balls, others pushed the snow upwards from the bottom of the sensory bin and molded it into a snowman. The students naturally used the loose parts to scoop and mold the snow or to stick into their snowmen to create arms, hats, eyes, noses, and buttons. Upon completing their snowmen, the students were very eager to share their creations with their teachers and friends and could be heard commenting on what they used to make their snowman unique, such as, "He has a hat!" The River students enjoyed exploring the snow and connecting these explorations to the story.

**Environmental Education: Snowy Animal Tracks:** The River students continued their environmental studies about Footprints in the Snow by exploring snowy animal tracks. With the snow continuing to fall, the River students were excited to get outside and experience what the snow felt and looked like. Upon going outside, the River students noticed some toy animals lined up in the snow and were immediately curious to investigate. The River students began to pick the animals up and place them on top of the mounds of snow. As the students placed the animals in the snow, a teacher prompted the students to take notice of the footprints created by the animals. After picking the animals back up, the students were excited to see the different tracks left by each animal in the snow. Some students noted, "I see it's toes!" Several of the students began to naturally compare the animal tracks to their own footprints that had been left in the snow, and then began to compare the different animals' footprints. After stamping one animal's feet in the snow, the students would pick up another animal and stamp its feet next to the previous tracks. The students observed that the larger animals made bigger footprints and the smaller animals created smaller footprints.



"His feet are bigger!" Emery determines after comparing the tiger and polar bear's tracks in the snow.

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Snow
- Tracks
- Footprints
- Bigger
- Smaller

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What do you notice about the animals' footprints?
- What do you notice about your footprints?
- Which animal's footprints are the biggest?
- Which animal's footprints are the smallest?

**Floor Book:** We revisited our first explorations of music with our classroom floorbook. The students were provided with photographs of the provocation set up with the musical instruments. The floor book is used as a documentation which teachers record the children's ideas and thoughts. It is also used in the planning process within the project. Students were able to reflect with the floorbook in small groups. They were able to pick out pictures of themselves participating in the musical provocation. The teacher helped the students tape the pictures of themselves into the floorbook as they discussed what was happening in the picture. Students identified the different instruments they were using in the pictures. They also identified the different images they were holding in their pictures. These were the images that represented the different nursery rhymes they love to sing. As the students discussed this while coloring in the floorbook, they began to sing these popular songs, such as "Do You Know the Muffin Man?" and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." This activity enhanced the anticipation for what is to come in our music project!



Ava colors on a picture of her shaking a bell.

**Vocabulary Words:**

- Draw
- Reflect
- Music

**Questions for Reflection:**

- What are you doing in this picture?
- What songs were you singing?

**Super Friend:** On Friday, January 17th, Emery was named the Super Friend of the River classroom! When the teachers called for clean up after playing in open centers, Emery was the first friend to help! A teacher asked Emery to do a special favor - to carry a large



laundry basket to a carpet on the other side of the room so that her friends could put toys in it. Emery helped without hesitation! She continued cleaning up until all the toys were put away. Way to go, Emery!

During the week of January 20th-24th, Valentina was named the Super Friend of the River classroom! Valentina noticed that one of her teachers was working to put away the bugs, and without being asked, she came over and said, "I help you!" Valentina continued to help her teacher put all of the bugs away. After helping her teacher, Valentina began to help put away all of the food and encouraged her friends to help clean up by showing them where they could put their toys. Awesome work, Valentina!



**Star Student:** During the week of January 13th-17th, Michaela was the Star Student for the River classroom. Michaela was incredibly excited to share the pictures and special items that she brought in with her friends. While sharing her special items with her friends, Michaela was particularly excited to share her Elsa pillow, her bag of alphabet letters, and several of her favorite books. Michaela surprised her friends by reading the



book, *Just One You!*, to her River friends. On Wednesday, January 15th, Michaela's mom and dad came in to read some of Michaela's favorite books to the class. Thank you Michaela and Mr. and Mrs. Grodecki for sharing with the River classroom!

### **Enrichments:**

**Foreign Language:** In French class, students have been practicing colors and numbers with author of the month, Alice Schertle. First, they listened to *Le petit camion bleu ouvre la voie* (*Little Blue Truck Leads the Way*). They found and then counted all of the blue Legos that matched Little Blue Truck in French. They watched *La Pomme est rouge* to learn six basic colors (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JeYG2eKT2Og>). We also read *1, 2 Je t'aime* (*1, 2 I Love You*). Then, we counted and sang *Dix petits cloches* (10 little bells) before singing *Frère Jacques* and ringing the "morning bells." Mrs. Lardin



**Creative Dance and Movement:** The River Room began their tap unit in creative movement & dance last week. We warmed up our bodies with our stretch sequence, which includes making dance glue to help us create our butterflies wings and stretching our legs in 2<sup>nd</sup> position to make a pizza! We have also kept the ballet “ballet warm up” in our stretch sequence because the River friends enjoy it so much! Next we continued work on our foundational dance skills like gallops, tippy toes and, kicks. Ms. Burdi brought in her tap shoes and the River friends noticed that there are two pieces of metal on the bottom that are very hard and cold. Next Ms. Burdi did a demonstration and showed how tap dancers make rhythmic sounds with their feet. The river friends had fun learning tap steps like shuffle, heel dig & boogie woogie ~ Mrs. Burdi



**Music:** River students are enjoying engaging music games and activities. We are singing songs about snowflakes and winter for the season. Many of our songs relate to identifying body parts and specific movements, like marching, touching toes or nose.~ Ms. Wegener



**Art:** ~ 1/22/20

This week, the River students are starting the auction piece for real! Ms. James prepared a white pulled canvas and taped off a tree trunk. The first layer will be a black tree trunk, using mixed media. The students will use black acrylic paint, black tissue paper, and black yarn, to fill in the tree trunk.

1/15/20



This Week the River class is continuing to experiment with the multilayered project. The River students



applied many different colors with Q-tips on top of the first layer. We practiced making dots with the Q-tips, that will resemble flowers when it is all put together.

### **Parenting Tip:**

<https://www.nammfoundation.org/articles/2014-06-01/music-and-toddlers-benefits-music-and-movement-early-childhood>

### **Classroom and School Reminders:**

- Elmhurst Academy will participate in Multicultural Children's Book Day, during the week of January 27-31. Families are welcomed to bring in a book with their children that promote the diversity of your family, culture or traditions that we can share with the class.
- Elmhurst Academy will celebrate Diversity Night on Friday, March 20. The countries this year will be Armenia, Argentina and Germany. We are asking our Elmhurst Community if you have a connection to either country and would like to help enrich the students global study leading up to Diversity Night to please contact Mrs. Atkinson- [eatkinson@elmhurstacademy.com](mailto:eatkinson@elmhurstacademy.com)
- \* It's time for the next Box Tops for Education Collection Classroom Challenge! Monday, January 13-Monday, February 3, 2020. Be sure you download the Box Tops App on your phone! Please email Mrs. Webber at [mwebber@elmhurstacademy.com](mailto:mwebber@elmhurstacademy.com) for any questions.
- Please take your children's hats, gloves, and coats home every night and wash regularly to prevent the spread of germs/illnesses.
- Please take your children's lovies home every night and wash at least once a week to prevent the spread of germs/illnesses.
- Please be sure to check your child's mail folder everyday for school notices
- Global Citizenship Committee would like to introduce the Family Connection Form. If you would like to share an important event or cultural experience you and your child participated in over the weekend, please fill out a Family Connection Form and bring to your child's classroom teacher, for the opportunity to share our experiences with each other and bridge home and school. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17feohQKsTjpAGPcjpWCazKoUy5ldqoQ8SRqcHdEBobU/edit?ts=5d83ea8a>